

Free Tuition for Massachusetts Students: A Curse or a Blessing?

By Nihit Aurora

Education in the United States is getting more and more expensive with each passing year. A significant number of students have been forced to borrow from a variety of sources to pursue university degrees and continue to repay their debts for many years following the completion of their educational pursuits.

Massachusetts Governor Deval Patrick recently announced a free community college tuition proposal; however, educators stated his plan would not solve the problems of low-income students entirely.

The plan, which aims to strengthen the state's workforce, currently awaits legislative proposal. It has the potential to benefit many students who wish to seek community college degrees. However, according to the *Boston Globe*, educators from across the state feel this plan may not benefit everyone seeking education beyond high school. They claim that this policy can't be standardized to fit the requirements of a large population; thus, it is not a "cure all" for the Massachusetts student community.

Since students must pay for transportation and living expenses in addition to tuition, critics claim the plan only helps students who live with their parents. Educators also argue that this plan will not benefit students who are employed; employed students would have to give up their jobs in order to be eligible for the free tuition plan. However, it is quite unlikely that students will give up their employment, as many of them have families to support.

There has been a fair amount of criticism of Patrick's "cradle-to-career" plan. Currently, around 200,000 students are enrolled in community colleges in the state. The *Boston Globe* reports that it could cost nearly \$175 million per year to provide free tuition to students enrolled in Massachusetts's 15 community colleges.